

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Approach of the Kingdom, and Its King

by Dan Trygg

“And He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ And Peter answered and said, ‘The Christ of God.’²¹ But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,²² saying, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.’...⁵¹ And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem; ⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him.”

Luke 9:20-22,51-52

“After this, the Lord appointed 70 others, and He sent them ahead of Him in pairs to every town and place where He Himself was about to go. ² He told them: ‘The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’³ Now go; I’m sending you out like lambs among wolves...⁸ When you enter any town, and they welcome you, eat the things set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there, and tell them, “*The kingdom of God has come near you.*”¹⁰ When you enter any town, and they don’t welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹ “‘We are wiping off as a witness against you even the dust of your town that clings to our feet. Know this for certain: *The kingdom of God has come near*’” “^{11:20} ...If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then *the kingdom of God has come to you.*” Luke 10:1-3,8-10; 11:20

Sometimes we forget that the message of Jesus was *all about the kingdom of God*.

John the Baptist had told people to get themselves ready. *Prepare. The kingdom of God was coming*, ...it was on the way, ...it was approaching, ...it was *on the verge*.

Then Jesus came and *did the works of the kingdom*. When messengers from the Baptist came to question Him, saying, “Are you the Expected One, or should we look for someone else?”, **Jesus pointed to these works as the signs and evidence of who He was.** “At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He granted sight to many *who were* blind.²² And He answered and said to them, ‘Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them.’²³ And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me” (Lk. 7:21-23). Clearly, He was indicating that He was, indeed, the Expected One. Then, “**He began going from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God, and the twelve were with Him**”, because they were being supported by contributions at this time, and He *taught the parables of the kingdom* to a great multitude of people who were now journeying to meet Him (Lk. 8:1-4).

In the next chapter, we see **Jesus commissioned the twelve to go out among the villages to proclaim the kingdom of God, to heal the sick and cast out demons by the authority He gave to them** (Lk. 9:1-6). Again, this was meant as a *demonstration* that the kingdom of God was present among them. It was the power of the kingdom that enabled them to do these dramatic signs. Note that Jesus Himself was not with them, but *He was the one who gave them the power and authority to do these works*.

After witnessing the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus asked them, “Who do people say that I am?” People had been speculating that He was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the great prophets of old. Then, **Jesus asked, “But who do you say that I am?”** Peter immediately replied, “**You are the Christ of God**” (Lk. 9:20). **What did that mean?** Luke later defined for us what that meant, through the mouth of Jesus’ own enemies. They would later accuse Him of saying that **He is Christ, a King** (Lk. 23:2). Peter had seen it more clearly, however. **Jesus was not just a king, ...He was THE KING, the anointed Messiah of God!** The promised One who would bring in the kingdom age of God!

Jesus immediately warned them not to talk about this openly. He also began to openly prepare them for what would later happen to Him in Jerusalem. He plainly told them that He *must suffer many things, and be rejected* by the religious leaders. He would be *killed*, but He would also be raised from the dead on the third day (Lk. 9:21,22).

It was in the context of *this statement* that Jesus issued the discipleship call or invitation: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”²⁴ For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.²⁵ For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?” (Lk. 9:23-25). What must that have sounded like to these twelve men, who had already left so much to follow Him? No wonder that one of the other gospels would later record one of the apostles saying, “Come, let us also go, that we may die with Him” (Jn. 11:16). **This following Jesus was a serious business, ...possibly even a dangerous business.** It meant giving up *everything*.

But they had never seen anything like what they had seen Jesus do. And they had never experienced or done the things *they were now* experiencing and doing! **They were healing the sick and casting out demons!** This was amazing! It truly *was* the kingdom of God come to earth, here and now. They were experiencing it for themselves!

Then, a week later, Jesus took Peter, James and John to a high mountain, where He was transfigured before them. **These three saw the glory of God shining out from Him**, and saw Moses and Elijah talking with Him. **They heard God's voice** out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One, listen to Him!" Afterward, again, He told them to tell no one what they had seen. Then, after casting out a demon from a boy, while the crowd was amazed at the greatness of God which they just witnessed, **He told His disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men."** But they did not understand what He was saying (Lk. 9:28-45).

Soon, **Jesus appointed seventy others to go out ahead of Him** to every place He was going to come. **They also were to heal the sick and cast out demons, proclaiming, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."** Concerning those cities or villages that would not accept them, ...they were to wipe the dust off their feet in protest as they left saying, **"Be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near."**

So, it was not just Jesus going through the land, proclaiming the kingdom of God, and doing the works of the kingdom. He had many others going before Him, proclaiming the same message, ...that the kingdom was near, and doing the same works of demonstration of kingdom-power. They openly talked about Jesus as the Source of the power and authority they had to heal and drive out demons. And, they told the people that Jesus Himself would soon be coming after they left. **The proclamation and demonstration of the kingdom of God was advancing and spreading through many teams of disciples before Jesus, as He made His way toward Jerusalem.**

This message that Jesus was preaching was not limited to Him. It was not even limited to Him and His close associates. There were even more teams of people going through the land, proclaiming that the kingdom of God was "at hand", "impending", "in their midst", ...and then demonstrating it by healing someone, or taking authority over an evil spirit and impelling it to leave at their command. **Whatever this kingdom-of-God-thing was, it was busting forth all over, ...and it was good, and brought blessing.** It was quite clearly defeating the power of disease and the bondage of the devil. **And, while it wasn't limited to Jesus, it all was originating from Him, and pointing to Him.** All these teams of men were sent as emissaries of Jesus, representatives of His, to give people a taste of the kingdom-power that was even more powerfully present and operating through Him. Jesus Himself gave the glory to His Father in heaven, but it was clear that **He Himself was the voice, advocate and example for the kingdom of God which was now being multiplied in the lives of these other people. Furthermore, He was calling the multitudes to follow Him. He was the focus of the kingdom message.**

You can imagine the growing excitement, the building enthusiasm, as the advance teams come through the villages and cities along the way, and then Jesus Himself comes. All along, He is challenging and calling people to follow Him. **By the time He gets to Jerusalem, everyone was talking about Him.** Many, many had been directly impacted by either His representatives, or by Him. **Many had come out to see and hear for themselves, and had been profoundly touched by His message, and the power of God at work through Him. This most certainly was nothing like anything they had seen before!**

He also had encountered many detractors, those who disregarded Him as a nobody from Galilee, or others who thought of Him as some kind of trickster. **The Pharisees and chief priests saw Him as disruptive**, and as a dangerous influence that they could not control. They had often tried to challenge Him, or trick Him in some trap, but He kept evading their plots. Even worse, He was exposing their faults and hypocrisy. **They were afraid that the popular devotion of His followers would bring the wrath of Rome upon their heads.**

All this growing, building energy came to a head on that Sunday before the Passover Feast. Jesus sent two of His disciples ahead to get a young donkey that had never been ridden on. They put their outer garments on it, and Jesus came over the Mount of Olives from the east, and down the hillside toward the city of Jerusalem. As He came into view, other pilgrims, people who had lived in the towns and villages He and His men had ministered in, recognized Him, and began to also lay their garments down on the roadway in front of the donkey. Others cut leafy branches from the nearby trees, and met Him, waving their palm branches, or laying them in the roadway. **They began to cry out a well-known chorus from Psalm 118:25,26, "Hosanna (Save us)! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord", to which they added, "...even the King of Israel! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna (Save us!) in the highest places!"**

It is clear from the crowd's cry that they were responding to the message of Jesus, which had been proclaimed for the previous three and a half years, ...first by John the Baptist, then by Jesus, then by the twelve apostles and the 70 others selected by Jesus to preach about and demonstrate the kingdom. The message was that the kingdom of God was at hand, on the verge. **They finally put together that their King, the One who had been proclaiming the coming kingdom was here**, riding on a colt of a donkey, just as the prophet, Zechariah had foretold. He came in power, in excitement, in recognition, in thunderous celebration. **They had seen the power of God at work in Him, and had seen the healing and blessing that came from Him. At this moment, they celebrated the coming kingdom and their King.**